

A Case for the “Gulf of America”

Renaming the Gulf of Mexico

Roy Dalton Pope, Jr., PhD

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Author Notes

Dr. Pope is an ordained minister with a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion, as well as twenty-one honorary doctorates. He has an academic undergraduate degree in accounting, and has completed undergraduate studies in the field of computer science. He holds honorary commissions as Admiral in the Alabama State Navy (Naval Militia), Colonel in the Alabama State Militia, and Kentucky Colonel. He is a member of the nobility in the Ashante Empire of Ghana, commissioned as a Noble Kofo (*Akan*, “warrior”) with the rank of Grand Officer in the Royal Order of the Golden Fire Dog (KGOG), in the Royal House of Sefwi Obeng-Mim. He is also commissioned to the rank of Grand Cross in the Royal Order of the Tiger and Hawk (GCTH), in the Royal House of New Sawereso-Seinuah, in Ghana, and is a Chevalier of the Commandery of the Moulin de Moxhe of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, in Moxhe, Liege, Belgium.

Abstract

Following his 2025 presidential inauguration, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to rename the Gulf of Mexico to the “Gulf of America.” This controversial decision has sparked debate, with some supporting the change and others opposing it. This essay argues in favor of renaming the gulf to the “Gulf of America,” emphasizing the importance of accurately reflecting the shared geography of the region. The name “Gulf of Mexico” is historically rooted in colonial times, but it carries a misleading implication of ownership by Mexico when, in fact, the gulf is bordered by three nations: the United States of America, Mexico, and Cuba. Renaming the gulf would better represent the geographical reality that all three nations share the waters, with the United States of America and Mexico each possessing nearly identical coastlines along the gulf. Additionally, the term “Gulf of America” would symbolize unity among the nations of the Americas and highlight their collective responsibility in managing the gulf’s resources. This essay also discusses the potential benefits of the name change, including promoting environmental cooperation and reinforcing regional solidarity. Ultimately, renaming the gulf to the “Gulf of America” would modernize the way we think about the region, emphasizing collaboration over ownership and reflecting the interconnected nature of the Americas today.

Keywords: Gulf of America, Gulf of Mexico, geographical naming, United States of America, Mexico, Cuba, shared resources, environmental cooperation, regional unity, historical context

A Case for the “Gulf of America”

The body of water historically known as the Gulf of Mexico is one of the most important bodies of water in the world, bordered by three countries: the United States of America, Mexico, and Cuba. It has long been known by the name “Gulf of Mexico,” a term that dates back to the 17th century. However, in 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to rename it the “Gulf of America.” While this decision has sparked a great deal of controversy, the president’s move to rename the gulf has significant merit. Renaming it the “Gulf of America” would better reflect the reality of its geographical location, remove the misleading implication of ownership by Mexico, and highlight the shared role of all countries in the Americas in the governance and stewardship of the gulf.

Historical Context and the Name’s Origins

The term “Gulf of Mexico” originated in the late 1600s, when French Jesuit explorers referred to the body of water as “Golphe du Mexique” in their maps and writings. This name was appropriate at the time, as Mexico played a central role in the region during the colonial era. The gulf was a critical part of Mexico’s territorial waters, and the name reflected the political and economic importance of Mexico in the region. However, in the present day, the name “Gulf of Mexico” is no longer accurate in representing the full geographical context.

The name also carries an implication of ownership. The use of the word “of” in the phrase “Gulf of Mexico” suggests that Mexico controls or possesses the gulf waters. This is not true, as the gulf is shared by three nations: the United States of America, Mexico, and Cuba. With the U.S. coastline on the gulf nearly as long as Mexico’s—just 43 miles shorter—it is clear that the United States of America has just as much a claim to the gulf as Mexico. This imbalance is misleading and leaves out the significant role that other countries, particularly the United States of America, play in the region.

The Argument for Renaming the Gulf

Renaming the gulf to the “Gulf of America” offers several advantages. First, the new name would more accurately represent the reality of the region’s geography. The term

“America” refers to the entire continent, including North, Central, and South America, and encompasses the shared interests and responsibilities of all countries within it. By renaming the gulf to the “Gulf of America,” we acknowledge the interconnectedness of the nations surrounding it. No single country, the United States of America, Mexico, or otherwise, has exclusive control over the waters, and the name should reflect this shared ownership and responsibility.

The name “Gulf of America” would remove the misleading implication of Mexican ownership. Currently, the name “Gulf of Mexico” may give the false impression that Mexico holds exclusive rights to the gulf, which is not the case. With the United States of America sharing such a similar coastline along the gulf—1,740 miles compared to Mexico’s 1,743 miles¹—the current name unfairly elevates Mexico’s claim to the water. The change to “Gulf of America” would better reflect the fact that the gulf is a natural resource for all nations within the Americas to manage and protect.

Furthermore, renaming the gulf would bring attention to the broader identity of the Americas as a unified region. Just as North and South America are often considered together when discussing geopolitical matters, the gulf is an important shared resource that connects multiple nations in the Americas. By renaming it to the “Gulf of America,” we would underscore the unity and cooperation that should exist among these nations, particularly as they work together to address shared challenges such as environmental conservation, economic cooperation, and regional security.

The Potential Benefits

Renaming the gulf to the “Gulf of America” could also have symbolic benefits. It would serve as a diplomatic gesture, emphasizing the collective interests of the Americas over the interests of any one nation. It would be a step toward promoting regional unity and cooperation, especially in terms of the environmental stewardship of the gulf. The region has long struggled with pollution, oil spills, and overfishing, issues that cannot be

¹ “Gulf of Mexico,” Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_of_Mexico

solved by one country alone. A shared name would highlight the need for collaboration across borders to protect this vital ecosystem.

Additionally, the name change could help to modernize the way we think about the region. The term “Gulf of Mexico” may have made sense in the past, but today, the gulf is not just a body of water tied to one nation—it is a shared resource that connects the people and economies of multiple countries. Renaming it the “Gulf of America” would reflect the reality of the globalized world we live in today, where nations must work together to solve pressing environmental and economic challenges.

A Name for the Future

Renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the “Gulf of America” is a step toward recognizing the true nature of the region as a shared space that belongs to all nations within the Americas. It removes the misleading notion of ownership by Mexico, acknowledges the importance of the United States of America and other countries in the region, and emphasizes the need for cooperation in managing this vital body of water. While change can be difficult, in this case, renaming the gulf is not just a matter of political symbolism—it is an opportunity to reflect the reality of the region’s interconnectedness and to promote a sense of unity and shared responsibility among the nations of the Americas. By embracing this new name, we can look to the future with a more inclusive, accurate, and cooperative vision for the Gulf of America.